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C. Fiction

The greater part of the Central-South Region came under Communist control after other sections of China had been conquered. This region was one of the last to face problems of industrial recovery, agricultural revival, the land reform, and the liquidation of anti-Communist forces. Since Communist literature is intended to describe the solution of these problems, stories and novels which dealt with these aspects had already been produced in Manchuria, North China, and East China. As a result, all the writings in this region seem stereotyped and lacking in originality. 538

Take, for instance, the short story "Ah Ts'ai," which describes the suffering and liberation of a woman in an emigrant community in Kwangtung. The plot closely follows that of other "formula" stories concerning other regions of China, although in "Ah Ts'ai" some use is made of local customs. Among the literature on the war of resistance against Japan, stories of the "heroic" deeds of the 8th Route Army in North China overshadow the accounts of anti-Japanese activities in Central-South China.

Publishing houses in the Central-South Region, notably the South-China People's Publishing House in Canton and the Central-South People's Publishing House in Hankow, are merely branches of the government's publishing enterprise which has its headquarters in Peking, whence policy is established on the kinds of literature to be published and distributed. The centralization of publishing assures the widespread popularity of novels which have received government approval. 214

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The Communists' effort to eliminate books with ideologically objectionable contents was paralleled by endeavors to provide the people with books, pamphlets, comic strips, and other publications designed for political indoctrination. In additional to shipping such books from Peking and Shanghai, where the nation's major publishing houses are located, the Communists in this region also have local presses turning out publications for local readers. At present each provincial government in the region operates a "People's press," which publishes books, pamphlets, and other works of a political nature. In many provinces there are also so-called "specialized presses" devoted to the publication of books in specialized fields for the worker, the farmer, and young people.

Local authorities also make full use of the small number of privately and semi-privately owned publishing houses in publishing literature for purposes of propaganda and mass indoctrination.

Publications are not distributed by the publishers themselves but by a separate book distributing network consisting of two channels, public and private. The public channel consists of the branch stores of the Hsin-hua Book Company. As of September 1950, there were 505 such branch stores of "various grades" in Central-South China.[19] At the same time,

19. Chao I-min, "Kuan-yü Wen-chiao Wei-yüan-hui Ti Kung-tso Pao-kao," ["Report on the Work of the Commission on Cultural and Educational Affairs"], Cheng-fu Kung-tso Pao-kao Hui-pien [A Compendium of Government Reports (1950)], Peking, 1951, pp. 757-758.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

incomplete statistics showed that the private channel of the book distributing network included 448 privately-owned bookstores as well as sidewalk book stalls, which numbered 586 in Wuhan alone.[20]

To make publications intended for the masses still more conveniently accessible to the popular reader, the Communist regime has reportedly established an impressive number of "cultural palaces" (community centers) and reading rooms in cities, towns, and villages. For instance, in Kwangsi Province there are 120 "large cultural palaces," 186 "small cultural places," and 973 reading rooms.[21]

Information on other media of propaganda and public information are by no means less important than the press, radio, the stage, and books and other publications. They have been omitted simply because there is less justification for dealing with them on a regional basis. Most if not all are systematically controlled and utilized by the Communists, and the propaganda they communicate and the information on public affairs they provide are similar to those communicated through the media we have discussed.

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20. Ibid.

21. The Sixth Department of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang, Kwangsi Fei-ch'ing [Communist Rule in Kwangsi], Taipei, Taiwan, 1955, p. 29.